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Attorneys for Plaintiffs

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR DISTRICT OF OREGON
PENDLETON DIVISION

GREATER HELLS CANYON COUNCIL, an
Oregon nonprofit corporation,
and **OREGON WILD**, an Oregon nonprofit
corporation,

Plaintiffs,

v.

KRIS STEIN, District Ranger, Eagle Cap Ranger
District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, in
her official capacity; and **UNITED STATES
FOREST SERVICE**, an agency of the United
States Department of Agriculture,

Defendants,

and

WALLOWA COUNTY, a political subdivision
of the State of Oregon,

Defendant-Intervenor.

Case Number: 2:17-cv-00843-SU

**DECLARATION OF MARIA
BELKNAP IN SUPPORT OF
PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR
INJUNCTION PENDING APPEAL**

I, Maria Belknap, state and declare as follows:

1. I was born and raised in Oregon, and am from a heritage family. I currently reside in California, yet spend at least two months every year in the Lostine Canyon. I have been a member of the Greater Hells Canyon Council (formerly, Hells Canyon Preservation Council) for more than 20 years.
2. I, along with two other families, own Lapover Ranch, a 193 acre private in-holding surrounded by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project (Lostine Project) area. The property spans both sides of the Lostine River and the steeply graded Lostine Canyon. My family has been involved with the Ranch since the early 1950s and have been co-owners of Lapover since 1976. I spent much of my youth in the Lostine Canyon and for the past 20 years, my months at Lapover provide me a welcomed change of pace from California life.
3. The Ranch and the Lostine Canyon are steeped in my heart and soul, and I feel a custodial responsibility to them. I want to protect the Canyon's wildlife, rare plants, clean waters, and fisheries. This custodianship runs deep in my family, my father being instrumental in securing Wild and Scenic designation for the Lostine River in 1988.
4. For more than 50 years, I have hiked and ridden through the Wallowas. Between 1976 and 1981, I worked for the United States Forest Service in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest both as a backcountry ranger and as the Lostine Canyon Guard, stationed in the Lostine Canyon, the same area that is now part of the Lostine Project.
5. My tenure in the Lostine Canyon has afforded me unique insights into this ecosystem. I know the old Native American and sheepherder trails, no longer on the maps. I know the location of frontier cabins, both remnant and those destroyed by the USFS decades before. I

know the location of old Nez Perce grave sites, where the historic mineshafts are located, and where the elk wallow and the bear den. I have had numerous sightings of Peregrine falcons soaring through the canyon. Whether hiking or riding horses through its forests I pick up trash, disperse unauthorized fire rings, and in general do my best to care for the land.

6. Because of decades of working, recreating and living in the middle of the Lostine Canyon, I know intimately the history of the canyon, the people who have and continue to frequent it, and possess a thorough understanding of the delicate ecology of this area.

7. I believe the Lostine Canyon is one of the most important places on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest both ecologically and socially. The narrow canyon floor created by steep glaciated slopes makes it disproportionately important for a diversity of wildlife, e.g., one of three Wolverines known to exist in Oregon resides in Lostine Canyon. It is also home to coyote, cougar, bobcat, weasel, marmot, deer, elk, bear, recently moose and other species. The Lostine River itself is important for beaver, Chinook Salmon, Bull Trout, Rainbow Trout and other fish as well as the human communities that appreciate them. This scenic corridor is close to population centers of Wallowa and Union Counties and provides access to popular trailheads and camping areas for both residents and visitors.

8. I understand that thinning the forests of the Lostine Canyon *may* improve its health, but *not* in the heavy handed way authorized for the Lostine Project. For the last 12 years, I have worked closely with the Oregon Department of Forestry to thin the forest at Lapover for health, fuel reductions, and habitat improvement. I targeted tree species for stand health and diversity, retaining larger fire resistant species, removed small diameter trees and flashy ladder fuels, and created fuel breaks around the structures without leaving a “cut trace” such as high stumps. I

reseeded with native grasses. The majority of work was performed by hand to protect the fragile vegetative ground cover.

9. I talked with the Forest Service a number of years ago, hopeful of initiating similar forest improvements on the adjacent public lands. Now that the agency is taking action, I am dismayed that it is seemingly more interested in getting timber volume out of the Canyon than being a good steward.

10. I am devastated by the proposed commercial logging, including the 18 acres of clear cuts and 450 acres of aggressive logging including in old growth forests. Many of the commercial timber sale units are currently healthy, intact mature forests. After building roads into every unit, logging and machine piling every merchantable tree except the few ringed with orange, the forest will be decimated.

11. I have walked in some of the old growth units and am angry and heartbroken that mature and old grand fir trees - critical wildlife habitat - will be logged under the guise of “danger” trees. After already removing thousands of “hazard” trees along the river corridor, the remaining large trees are critical to old growth dependent wildlife. The forests in the adjacent Eagle Cap Wilderness do not contain the same forest types – they are more open, higher elevation forests with fewer large trees. The river corridor’s lush closed-canopy forest is critical to many wildlife species.

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12. This Project will diminish my enjoyment and sense of peace during my time in the Lostine Canyon for the foreseeable future and probably for my lifetime.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on this 21st day of September 2018.

s/ *Maria Belknap*
Maria Belknap